

What are the benefits of emotional intelligence?

- Time and time again, we hear senior leaders in organizations say they hire and promote based on emotional intelligence rather than particular skills or IQ. And there's a very good reason for this. Research shows emotional intelligence to be the key factor that sets high-performing individuals and high achievers aside from the rest of the crowd. Hello, I'm Gemma Leigh Roberts. In this course, I'm going to take you through the four key factors of emotional intelligence, and I'll help you to practically apply what you learn to enhance your personal performance in the workplace and in your personal life. You'll learn how developing your emotional intelligence can help you to reach ambitious personal performance goals, such as working towards a promotion or building a thriving team. I'll also teach you how developing your emotional intelligence will impact how you interact with others, helping you to build strong and collaborative relationships. So if you want to perform at your peak and create success in your career, emotional intelligence is one of the top skills that you need to develop.

What is emotional intelligence (EQ)?

- Understanding and developing your emotional intelligence is essential if you want to successfully progress in your career. Not only will you reap the rewards personally by enhancing your performance, but you'll also foster strong relationships with others, helping you to collectively achieve more. So let's start at the beginning. What exactly do we mean by emotional intelligence? Well, when we talk about emotional intelligence, we're really focusing on two areas, understanding and expressing our emotions, and being empathetic when communicating with others. The second thing you need to know is emotional intelligence is part of our psychological makeup, along with our personalities and IQ, which is a measure of general intelligence. These three elements make us who we are, and they determine how we interact with others. We all use each of these three elements to varying degrees, and research has shown personality and IQ don't predict emotional intelligence. In fact, all three elements operate independently, interacting together to help us solve problems and make decisions. So whatever personality type you are, or whatever your IQ score, you have the ability to be high on the emotional intelligence scale. Why

this is so interesting is because, generally speaking, personality and IQ are fairly fixed. They don't move a great deal throughout your adult life. This is not the case with emotional intelligence, however. You can enhance and grow your emotional intelligence, which will have a direct impact on your performance and personal achievements, and on the relationships you build. It's just a case of learning and practicing the skills. Emotional intelligence is sometimes known as EQ, which stands for emotional quotient. To help explain why we use the terminology EQ, consider the phrase IQ, which is the measure of general intelligence. Quite simply, EQ is the emotional version of general intelligence. Whereas IQ measures a person's reasoning ability and how they use information and logic to answer questions, the measurement of emotional intelligence is completely different. Measuring emotional intelligence focuses on four criteria. Firstly, being aware of emotions. Secondly, expressing emotions. Thirdly, controlling your emotions. And finally, handling relationships with others effectively. There are four areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship development. What you'll notice is the first two parts look inwards, focusing on yourself, firstly understanding your emotions, and then learning to manage them. The second two parts are outward facing, so being aware of social situations, and then managing and developing relationships. Take a moment to think about your emotional intelligence. How have you used your emotional intelligence in a work situation? Are there areas you could improve? I'd like you to start considering how you think about and react to situations and the changes you'd like to see.

The emotions in EQ

- Emotions are complex. For the most part, when we talk about emotions, we're referring to a feeling or a reaction influenced by our circumstances, our mood, or relationships with others. Think of emotions as feelings you experience. Emotions can reflect pleasure or displeasure, and can be extreme or mild. If you've ever felt intense anger, happiness, or joy, that's a psychological state caused by your emotions. There's so much room for variation between each of us. You may react to the exact same situation in a completely different way to me. There's also the potential for

variation within us. Have you ever reacted to an event in a really extreme way when you know on another day, it may have just been a mild irritation for you? Understanding and managing your emotions is critical if you want to enhance your performance and interact successfully with others. This is because much of how we perceive and interact with the world around us can be derived from our emotions. And if we're not consciously managing this process, our emotions are taking the lead. At times, this may work in our favor, but it may not. And it may be beneficial to control this process. Our emotions may cause a psychological response, which is all about how we process information and judge the situation in our heads. Emotions can also lead to a physiological response, which causes a physical reaction such as shaking or sweating. You may actually experience both of these types of reactions at the same time. So far, this process is internal, which means it's going on inside of your head and your body. This then leads to a behavioral reaction, which is how we then interact with others based on how we processed the situation. So let's look at an example. Bob isn't comfortable with public speaking, particularly in a work environment when he's in front of his peers and manager. Bob's in a large team meeting and his manager asks him to present his findings on a report he's been working on. So how does Bob experience the situation internally? He's uncomfortable and he dreads scenarios like this. He's filled with a sense of fear and he feels like he's been put on the spot. His palms start to sweat and his heart races. So his emotion of fear has led to a response, which is a feeling of anger, and physical symptoms including sweaty palms and a racing heart. He reacts defensively and doesn't use the opportunity to share his report findings with his team. The situation itself is neither positive nor negative. It's how Bob feels about the situation that's important. Emotions are core to who we are, and they provide us with a rich way to experience life. However, they don't always serve us in our best interest. So it's important to understand our emotions and how they affect our relationships. Now, if Bob looked at this situation as a missed opportunity to display his knowledge to his manager and his team, then managing his emotional response would be in his best interest. Your level of emotional intelligence will determine how you react to situations, how you face challenges, and how you build relationships with others. Understanding the role emotions play in how you process information and how you react to

events provides you with the opportunity to adapt your behavior to achieve the results that you want to see. You'll also build stronger relationships with your team and colleagues based on how you choose to behave, not how you automatically react. So how well do you feel that you manage your emotions at work? Do you feel in control of how you react to challenging events? Or is this something you'd like to get better at?

Managing emotional reactions

- Imagine this. You're in a meeting and you witness a heated exchange between two colleagues, Jane and Dave. It goes from one to 100 in a matter of seconds. What starts as a mild difference of opinion escalates into a blistering exchange as Dave takes offense to Jane's request to take on additional work. Have you ever been in the middle of a conversation and the next thing you know, it's turned into a heated exchange and you're not quite sure where it all went wrong? Emotional responses are so quick. It really takes conscious practice to become aware of our emotional response process. The first step is being aware of how our emotional response process works. When we've mastered this, the next step is to intercept that response process so you can control how you respond to events. To change anything, you first need to be aware of how the system works. Then you can go about making tweaks and changing your approach to achieve a better result. In the book "Thinking, Fast and Slow" Daniel Kahneman describes two ways we often think as humans. The first is very fast and highly emotional and intuitive. The second is slow, deliberate, and logical. Our fast thinking can be extremely useful day-to-day, helping us to make quick decisions and carry out tasks with ease. Sometimes, however, this type of thinking can get us into a thinking rut, leading us to use biases and assumptions to make decisions when actually there may be a better way to process the information. There will be times when we need to disrupt this automatic thinking process and slow our thinking down to reshape our judgment, reinterpret situations, and change our response all to get the most out of a situation. Think back to the exchange between Dave and Jane. Dave feels that Jane doesn't understand how stretched he is at work and he feels that Jane is quick to ask him to complete more tasks without considering his workload. Jane, on the other hand, feels that Dave continually undermines

her and instead of helping to find solutions, he refuses to change the way he does things, even if there's a way to achieve better results. Now, imagine that Dave and Jane had the psychological tools to slow down their emotional responses. Instead of assuming the other person was purposely trying to make their working life harder, both parties may have seen the situation as an opportunity to find a collaborative solution that works for both of them. In order to take control of your emotions and develop your emotional intelligence, you need two things. Firstly, acceptance. Secondly, the ability to slow your reactions down. Acceptance is important. We can't change the past, but we can learn from experiences to change our future. If you want to change the way you react emotionally or you want to build stronger relationships, start by accepting past behavior and using that to define how you want to behave and react in the future. It's a learning curve. In the heat of the moment, it can be really hard to slow down your thoughts and emotions, and this most definitely takes practice. You need to rationally intercept your thoughts at the feeling emotional stage, which takes conscious practice. The thing to remember is you do have control over your emotional reactions. If you can learn to take a moment to pause and objectively assess the situation, you're far more likely to achieve something positive from the situation. Some of our thinking will always be at the speed of light and that actually works in our favor. Do you really want to spend hours making a decision about which taxi app to use or debating the pros and cons of each product you pick up whilst out shopping? Automatic thinking stops us being overwhelmed by every small decision we need to make. The trick is to intercept and disrupt our thinking and emotional responses when it's not serving us.

Understanding your personal EQ

- Have you ever been in a situation where someone else's behavior has made you react strongly? Maybe you've been driving, and a car pulls out dangerously in front of you, making you angry and possibly little too free and easy with the car horn. Perhaps you've been queuing patiently in a line and someone nips in at the last minute and pushes in, making your blood boil. I think we can all recount numerous situations where someone else has behaved in a way that makes us react passionately to the situation. But the

truth of it is, it actually isn't always the other person's behavior that makes us react, although it certainly feels that way in the heat of the moment. We often associate behavior as being a response to an event or something happening to us. We tend to think of our own behavior and the behavior of others as a reaction, quite often to an event that's outside of our control. But actually, there's a step missing in this process. The actual chain reaction is more like this. An event takes place, you experience thoughts, feelings and emotions related to this event, and then you behave in a specific way to reflect your thoughts and emotions. The key here is to understand it's not events themselves that cause you to act. It's how you think and feel about these events which will lead you to respond. Recognizing your emotions is the first step in building your emotional intelligence. Your emotions will drive how you think about and react within the world. If you don't have the ability to recognize your emotions, then ultimately you won't have control over how you interact with others and how you view the world around you. It's a huge missed opportunity. To dive deeper and gain an overview of your emotional intelligence, it's useful to consider past challenging scenarios that you've experienced and analyze the parts you played in the scenario and the outcomes. In fact, it's useful to consider multiple challenging situations that you've faced, but one at a time. The best way to do this is to use the personal reflection tool which you can download from the exercise files or just use as a guide. Take some time to consider three challenging experiences you've had within the last six months, and answer the questions detailed in the guide. Reflection is a key part of understanding your emotions and building emotional intelligence. A top tip is to practice this reflection frequently after facing a challenging situation, as it's this reflection time that will help you to build your emotional intelligence in the future.

Managing your mindset

- Picture the scene, you're at work and you're about to head into an important meeting. A contract you desperately need to get signed has disappeared from your desk. The stakes are high. You need this document to secure an important deal. Immediately, you can feel the anger rise and your heart rate increases. And you can't help but be vocal about your frustration. You blame your boss. She's always giving you deadlines which just aren't

manageable. Then you blame the cleaners they must've thrown the contract out. Your lack of patience and stress coupled with your disdain for your boss, acts as a trigger causing an unfavorable reaction. So, you storm into the meeting and declare the deadline's been too tight as usual. You don't have support to effectively do your job and the cleaners should be held accountable. You've experienced a cognitive hijack. The way you think and process information has caused an irrational response. The triggers set you off. The emotion took over and your behavioral response was hijacked all creating a scenario which is less than I do. Our thoughts and emotions are so powerful. They can dictate how we experience the world around us and how we feel about situations. This thinking process can affect how we behave, how we interact with others, choices and decisions we make and how we perform at work. This cognitive process isn't always the slick well-oiled machine we need it to be, to get the most out of a situation. If you imagine all of the stimulants around us at any given point, our brains need to process information quickly. So we've aligned on cognitive shortcuts which help us to focus on the important information, I make quick decisions. This protects you from feeling overwhelmed and from finding even the most simple of decisions, a crippling challenge. But sometimes, our automatic information processing gets it wrong or it gets a bit lazy. When we analyze behaviors, we often find the same triggers hijack our thinking and throw us off course again and again. Your triggers are events or things that happen that cause you to feel and think in a way that isn't helpful. In a way that isn't going to achieve the best outcome from a situation. It may be that you fly off the handle or you were treat into yourself or you become defiant or stressed. Whatever is for you, the chances are, you know that your sponsor won't lead to the best outcome for you. So think about challenges you've faced over the last six months. Are there emotions you've experienced? Thoughts you've had about a situation that show up again and again. Are there triggers that set off an emotional response for you? You're looking for themes here and you're being a detective analyzing your past evidence. Now take it a step further and consider whether there are emotions that hijack the way you respond to situations.

Finding your flow

- Have you ever felt so absorbed in an activity that time passes without you even noticing. Maybe you became really engrossed in playing a sport, or you've got laser focus when you're working on a particular task, like creating new products or processes or writing articles. Perhaps there are parts of your work that you get so absorbed in, hours pass and you don't even notice. When we talk about developing emotional intelligence, often we focus on what you need to develop to get better at how you manage your emotions and how you interact with others. There are however many positive aspects associated with developing emotional intelligence. And one of these is finding what we call your flow. Firstly, what exactly is a flow? The best way to describe it is being in the zone. It's the practice of taking part in an activity that requires focus and distractions just fade into the background. Activities that give you that sense of flow will stretch you. And there'll be activities you enjoy so much that time stands still. Working in flow should feel effortless and rewarding. Working in a state of flow will help you to reach a level of peak performance, and it will help you to stretch yourself to achieve more. The good thing about working in a state of flow is often it won't feel like work at all, and you'll be taking part in activities that are interesting for you. The chances are you're good at your flow activities, so it makes sense to focus on what you're good at and capitalize on that. Emotionally, working in a state of flow is a positive experience. Working in this way will also mitigate against some of the triggers you experience that hijack your performance, increasing your chances of reaching your potential and achieving the most favorable outcome, even in challenging situations. Think about two people who carry out the same role. One person finds their daily activities create a sense of flow. They're challenging but enjoyable. Whereas someone else may find the exact same activities overwhelming, stressful, and de-motivating. That's why it's important to get really clear on what flow is for you as an individual and weave that into your working life, helping you to face challenges with confidence. When you're feeling confident after working in a state of flow, that will help you to view challenges positively. Whereas if you're feeling stressed, for example, and you have a challenge to deal with on top of this, you're not so likely to react in a way that will help you tackle the situation effectively and efficiently. Finding your flow and working with flow will help you build your emotional intelligence and reframe how you think about

and react to challenges, getting the most out of the situation. So think about your personal or working life. What activities creates a sense of flow for you? And could you add more of this to your working life?

Thoughts and emotional intelligence

- Have you ever had that pain of regrets or looking back you felt that you could have handled the situation better. Reacting quickly in the heat of the moment is the norm for most of us at one time or another. What most people don't know however, is you can follow a simple process to take control of your thoughts, your feelings and emotions which intern will help you behave in a way that gets the most out of every challenging situation you find yourself in. It's all about learning your A, B, C, D, E. This model is taken from cognitive behavioral coaching. It's a tool that helps you to take control and deal with potentially difficult situations confidently and effectively whilst building really strong relationships. Which are all key objectives in building emotional intelligence. Let's walk through the model with an example of how you can apply it in the real world. So picture the scene. Priya works as an accountant and has been finding one of her colleagues, Dan particularly challenging of late. Priya and Dan are working on a project. Priya is the project manager and requires information from Dan every week to track progress on the project. Dan is consistently late with the information he provides and this week he's been late with the information again. This is what we refer to as the activating event. Which in this case is Dan being late with the information he's been asked to provide. When considering the activating event, try to describe the situation as objectively as possible. How would you describe the situation if you are a reporter writing about the events with no prior knowledge or history of the facts? The idea here is to try and observe the event as an objective bystander. Priya believes that Dan is deliberately late with the information each week. As he doesn't think her work is valid or important. This cause is to feel angry. And she can't stop thinking about the fact that Dan doesn't respect her. Priya becomes irritable and decides she's going to confront Dan about his unacceptable behavior. Beliefs and thoughts about an event lead to an emotional response. In this case, Priya feels angry and thinks that Dan doesn't respect her. Priya confronts Dan in an aggressive manner. She's fueled by her anger and what she believes to be the

unfairness of Dan's behavior. During this confrontation Priya's approach starts and arguments with Dan. And their relationship is left even more fraught. Here, a clear consequence of how Priya is thinking and feeling about the situation is a negative response. An angry confrontation. In hindsight, Priya reflects on how she could have handled the situation better. She starts to think like an objective bystander. Maybe Dan doesn't see the relevance of the information he has to provide. Or maybe he isn't aware of how he is impacting Priya. Maybe he's not actually doing something to Priya on purpose, but rather than just not appreciating the impact of his actions. So this is a disrupting thought. It's about replacing beliefs and feelings about the event with something that will be more useful and will help you achieve a better result. By taking a step back and challenging her thoughts and beliefs, Priya becomes less angry with the situation. She's still irritated and she doesn't view the situation as I do. But she no longer feels annoyed. She's less stressed, less irritable with others and has a clear head, which means she can focus on trying to find solutions rather than dwelling on the experience. There is a clear, positive effect or consequence of Priya challenging her thoughts. So think about how you can use the A, B, C, D, E model. Use the disruptive thinking tool in the exercise files to reflect on how you have faced challenges and how you can change the way you think and feel about the situation to achieve a better result. Whether that be improved relationships or taking control of how you respond to challenges to achieve a better outcome for yourself and others. The key here is to repeat this process until it feels comfortable for you.

Dealing with stressful situations

- When was the last time you reacted to a situation at lightning speed? Flying off the handle and behaving in a way that probably wasn't the most effective way to deal with things. I would say we've all experienced this at one point or another. For some of us, it might be something that happens all of the time. The thing is the time between experiencing a feeling to reacting can be so quick, it can derail our responses to situations. It can be almost hard to imagine how you can break the chain between thinking and feeling and reacting. But it is possible with practice. What are some of the tactics that you can use to slow down your reaction time and choose how to respond? Step

one is to take a step back when you feel like you might be reacting emotionally and you could be more objective. Identifying when this is occurring is one of the most effective tactics you can employ. Step two, when you start to feel emotions such as anger or fear, try to give yourself some breathing space, unless it's imperative that you react immediately, which it may be in a crisis. Take 60 seconds to remove yourself from the situation and take deep breaths. This can be a hard habit to train yourself in, but taking slow, deep breaths can lower your heart rate if it's crept up and it can help with other physiological symptoms such as sweating and blushing. Step three is to give yourself time to recover. You should have had some space even if it's just for 60 seconds. Now let your body recover. Don't make any decisions and don't keep mulling over the scenario in your head. Just focus on feeling more level emotionally and physiologically. Step four, challenge your thoughts. Is there a way you can think about the situation that can create a better outcome for you? Although you may passionately feel that you want to confront the issue in a highly emotional state, consider if this is the best option in the long run, will it help you achieve the results you want to see? Finally, step five, choose how you will respond. You may decide that your original thoughts for the best course of action. Or you may decide on another approach, either way you have now assessed the best option for you and you can react accordingly. This process takes work and isn't always possible. It may be hard if you're feeling stressed or tired, but when you start to feel your emotions rise and physiological symptoms start to develop. If you can get some space to calm down and slowly choose how to interpret the information and then choose how to react, you're much more likely to achieve a positive outcome for you and for others. So what could you do to help slow down your reaction time when you feel negative emotions rising? It could be a simple breathing exercise or taking a walk for a few minutes. And in some ways the more simple the better as these strategies are easier to use in the heat of the moment.

Shift perspective to shape behavior

- Imagine this. You're watching a man running down the street, and all of a sudden he pushes a shocked passerby out of the way. The running man looks suspicious in his appearance, and he's holding a bag tight to his

body. You've pieced together the scene. The suspicious looking runner, the passerby pushed over, the bag stolen from the unsuspecting passerby, and you're wondering what to do. Except maybe you haven't seen everything about the scene. What if, from a different angle, it becomes clear that the man running towards the stranger was actually pushing him out of the way of an oncoming vehicle. So you often see things from other points of view. It can be hard to shift your perspective when you feel passionately about something. But this gives you an advantage because it broadens your horizons and you may learn something new. It also allows you to preempt how someone else may view a situation. And in turn, it will help you to understand how best to deal with that scenario, which is the basis for building successful and collaborative relationships. In order to shift your perspective and view events from different points of view, you have to make it a habit and build the process into how you view events before you make decisions about how to behave. There are some simple techniques you can use to help broaden your perspective. The first technique is to seek different points of view. It can be really easy to view an alternative perspective as a nuisance or an inconvenience, something else you have to consider when you've already made judgments about the situation. Instead, try to see these contrasting ideas as a bonus. Considering different points of view and ways of solving issues, will help you to find new and innovative ways to tackle challenges. You don't necessarily have to change your opinion but you will discover alternative viewpoints that will help you when you're communicating your thoughts with others. The second technique is to ask more questions. Listen to what others have to say. Ask others how they see the world around them. As well as broadening your perspective, you will also build a relationship with the other person, which is an additional positive outcome. Third, spend time with new people. It's really easy to get in the routine of speaking to the same people or the same kind of people. But building relationships with those outside of your normal peer group will give you a completely different insight into other perspectives. Fourth, read more in general and more broadly. To enhance your perspective, you have to be always learning and expanding your horizons. If you enjoy this process, it's an easy technique to implement. Even if you're not much of a reader, try a simple routine of reading on your commute or 20 minutes before bed or in

your lunch break. The ability to broaden personal perspective is a common skill displayed by high-performing individuals. So how developed is your perspective? There is so much opportunity available to you when you learn how to broaden your perspective, whether it be developing a new product or process based on feedback that you hadn't previously considered or perhaps taking a project in a more effective direction based on a perspective that you've explored. Being open to new ideas, different ways of thinking and being adaptable in how you achieve results is one of the key predictors of emotional intelligence. And these skills are hot commodities in organizations today.

Developing social awareness

- Have you ever intuitively felt like you're in a dangerous situation, or have you walked into a new place and immediately felt at home, like it's your kind of place? How does this happen? The chances are you're subconsciously processing information you've gathered from your senses to build an intuitive picture. You're subconsciously using your social awareness. How does social awareness fit into the model of emotional intelligence? Well, let's just take a step back. Self-awareness is about understanding your own emotions and character, which is essential if you want to enhance your emotional intelligence. But equally as important is building your social awareness, which is the ability to understand others and to respond to their needs. It's about being aware of what's going on around you and understanding other people's feelings. Building your social awareness is important as this is where you focus on taking what you've learned about how you process emotions and apply that to the world around you to create collaborative and successful relationships. It's a logical step by step process. Step one is thinking about your own self-awareness with an internal focus, which means looking inward and considering what's going on within your head. Once you've started to master developing that area, step two is to develop your social awareness, shifting the focus from internal reflection to an outward external observation, thinking about how you interact with others. There are simple techniques you can adopt and skills you can hone with practice that will help you to develop your social awareness. The first place to start is with your senses, and in particular, using your senses to

learn more about the world and people around you. Initially, it's helpful to use your senses to notice what's going on around you. What do you see, feel, hear? At this stage, you're gathering information, learning to pay attention to the details of your surroundings, whether that be noticing facial expressions and body language, or hearing specific tones in people's voices. Once you become proficient at this, you could start to piece that information together to get an idea of what people are thinking and the dynamics between people. Often when we describe people as intuitive, this is the process we're describing. A lot of this technique is about taking notice. Quite often, the information is there in front of us, but we're juggling so many demands, priorities, emotions, thoughts, feelings, it can take a bit of practice to step outside of ourselves and our own thoughts and immerse ourselves in our surroundings. How do you use your senses in social situations? Are you good at picking up on social cues and what's going on around you? Take some time to assess your social awareness, and think about how you can increase this.

Connecting with empathy

- Do you have the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand what they may be thinking or feeling? The ability to empathize with others is a key predictor of emotional intelligence. Empathizing provides you with a thorough understanding of the other person and helps to build strong relationships and better connections. Ultimately, empathy is the ability to sense other people's emotions whilst also being able to imagine what someone else may be thinking or feeling. It's a skill that you can learn to develop. The first thing you'll want to do is ask the other person questions to find out more about what they're experiencing and how they feel about the situation and the impact it's having on them. If you don't have the opportunity to ask questions, you can also take a step back and imagine the possibilities of how someone may think and feel. You don't necessarily have to be able to identify exactly with the other person. You don't need to have had the exact same experience to imagine what the situation may be like for them. You just need to take what you know about that person and their circumstance and imagine how they would feel, react, behave, and think about the situation. Of course, you don't want to necessarily assume you

know exactly what a situation is like for someone else, as that can actually be counterproductive. This might alienate the other person if your assumptions are incorrect. It's key to remember, when empathizing, you're not looking for the right answer, as only the other person knows exactly how they think and how they feel. Another tip when displaying your empathy is not to agree with everything the other person says, constantly finding examples when you've faced the exact same challenges or situations. Although we generally behave like this with the best intentions, as we want the other person to know we understand what they're experiencing, it can actually be irritating for the other person if we always have an example that brings the conversation back to us. The key here is balance. Ask questions, find out more, ask people how they feel, how they interpret the situation, and why they think and feel as they do. You can also offer support and understanding by using phrases such as I imagine that could make you feel or I suppose that situation could make you think. Note here, I haven't used definite statements such as it does or doesn't make you feel a certain way. The reason for this is you want the other person to know you understand how they feel, but you don't want them to think you know exactly what the situation is for them. So use tentative, exploratory language and words such as could, possibly, maybe. Don't get too hung up on the exact language here. Just remember two principles. One, ask questions to find out more. Two, offer support and understanding without assuming you have the answers or knowledge the other person requires. Overall, the benefit of empathizing is you get a better insight into how someone else is thinking and feeling, and it gives you the opportunity to build better relationships. Ultimately, most people want to be understood, and they want to make connections, whether that be in their work or personal life.

Communication and social awareness

- Communication is about getting your message across to others, right? Well, actually, that's only half of the story. And quite honestly, if that's all you focus on when developing your communication skills, you're missing a trick. Often, when we think about communicating, we consider how we can make our point effectively, and how others are going to interpret what we're saying. Communication, however, is a two way street, which involves providing information for others and gathering information from others. Let's

consider how you communicate your message. You may do this through speaking or writing, but actually, most of what we communicate is down to our body language and how we say something, not what we say. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who's told you they're fine? But you can tell from their tone of voice or body language, that that just isn't true at all. How we communicate with our voice and our bodies says a lot more about the actual message we want to get across rather than the exact words we use. So think about that. Most of what you communicate is probably unconscious. If you're not focused on your body language and tone of voice or tone of writing, then your message may not come across as you would like it to. And here's the key point. Your unconscious communication will be driven by your thoughts, your feelings, emotions, and mood. This is one of the reasons why it's so important to look inwards before considering how you interact with others when you're developing your emotional intelligence. The key to effective communication is listening. Yes, you will have a point of view, a message that you want to get across, but if you want to build effective and strong relationships, you also need to really listen to messages from the other person. And that includes words, tone, and body language. It can be really easy to fall into the trap of focusing on your points, particularly if the stakes are high or you're in a pressurized environment, but this is a missed opportunity. If you listen and interpret the other person's message, you're much more likely to find strong middle ground that you can both work with, building a collaborative and respectful relationship. You're also more likely to find solutions when facing challenges. And you may actually discover another way of looking at the situation, which you hadn't thought of, a new and useful alternative perspective that you can use again. Communication should be a process of information flowing equally between two parties. Remember, there's a difference between actually hearing what someone's saying and just not talking. Take some time to reflect on your communication style. Do you listen intently to others and really hear what they're saying? Are there times where you listen more than others? If so, when and why? And what can you do to become a better listener? If you're unsure of how well you communicate, the best ways to gain an insight is to gather feedback from others. Ask for opinions from colleagues or friends on how well you listen and how effectively you get your message across.

Play to your personal strengths

- How is it some people manage relationships with ease, whilst for some of us, we're not quite sure where to start? The chances are for those that naturally manage relationships well, this is a strength that has been developed over time. So what if managing relationships isn't your forte? Should you just give up? Absolutely not. You can turn creating effective relationships into your strength with a bit of practice and focus. You have your own unique strengths when it comes to managing relationships. You have your own style and way of communicating that's individual to you. Learning to capitalize on this will help you to play to your strengths in order to foster collaborative and effective relationships. Generally speaking, the more you can utilize your unique style, the more people will feel like they're making a genuine connection with you, which will help you to build trust, and that's a critical element in managing relationships. Playing to your strengths is about knowing where your strong points are and enhancing those whilst also developing areas of your emotional intelligence at the same time. This is an essential balance, and addressing this balance takes discipline and focus. When it comes to managing relationships, what would you say your strong points are? Common relationship management skills include communicating your message clearly and effectively, the ability to really listen to what others are saying, making people feel comfortable and understood, picking up on group dynamics quickly, having a talent for making genuine and authentic connections. Take some time to reflect on what your strengths are when it comes to managing relationships. The beauty of playing to your strengths is that you already have these natural talents, so using them won't feel like hard work. If anything, it will feel like a positive experience. If you need some pointers to help you reflect, consider answering these questions. How would you say others perceive you? What would you say are your key skills when it comes to interacting with others? Do you have the ability to read a room and really understand what someone else is feeling? What could you develop in this area? Once you have an idea of what your relationship strengths are, practice putting these into action across different social situations. Test what works well and not so well for you. The

best way to play to your strengths is to experiment and hone your skills until you're comfortable with displaying and using your signature strengths.

Collect feedback to build connection

- Have you ever wondered how others view and think about you? It's something that I've thought about a thousand times and I'll be honest, it always really intrigues me to find out how others view me. For example, I'm always hopeful that when I'm coaching I'll come across as positive and supportive, even when I'm really challenging my clients. But I often have to check in with the other person to make sure that's the case. There have been times I've had to adjust my approach based on how they perceive what I'm saying and my intentions. The only way to truly understand how others perceive you is to get their insights, and I understand how difficult that is. Sometimes it's more comfortable to live in a bubble of not asking for feedback. We can fear how others may perceive us which in turn can play into our emotional reactions. Being emotionally flexible however, means being able to listen to feedback and appreciate the points of view without being overly self-critical or defensive. Gathering feedback on yourself is one of the most useful techniques to help you grow. And the great thing about it is there's no scale or preparation required, you just have to ask others for their opinion. Sometimes you'll get a gem of a piece of feedback that may spur you on, or it may be a jam because it's pointing out something you weren't aware of. You can only grow and get better interacting with others if you have their perspective, so don't hide from it. One simple technique you can use to help you understand how others see you is the review, refine, repeat process. The first step is to review how you manage relationships currently. And the best way to do this is to gather feedback, choose a few colleagues or friends and ask them for their feedback on how you maintain and build relationships. If you need any pointers, you might want to consider questions such as, how do you think I generally come across to others? How would you describe me when I'm in a team environment? Is there anything specific I'm good at when it comes to interacting with other people? Are there any areas I could tweak to get better at building and maintaining relationships? Well, sometimes feedback may be a little tough to hear or you may be a bit surprised, gathering another perspective is always useful even if you don't

totally agree. The feedback you receive isn't a fact, it's an opinion, and the more opinions you can gather, the more of a rounded perspective you'll get of how you come across. Try not to get too hung up on one person's opinion instead, try to get a range of opinions to give you a broad perspective of how you come across to others. The next step in a continuous development process is to refine some of your approach. One small step at a time, over time as you make small adjustments these small steps will compound to create big results. What may seem like a small tweak or a minor adjustments to your approach now, over time may have a huge impact on building your emotional intelligence. Finally, repeat the process. We're all on a journey and we're all a work in progress to some extent. So you can always repeat the continuous development process and get better at building relationships and communicating effectively. Repeating this simple process will be a key factor in developing your emotional intelligence. Taking the emotion out of it and not perceiving feedback as emotional, allows you to turn it into a process. First, review how you're perceived. Second, refine and make tweaks to ensure you come across in a productive and empathetic way. Third, repeat process again and again. This three step approach also helps you to create a continuous development cycle, where you're constantly improving your relationship with others. So how will you build a continuous improvement process into your working life? Do you already use the review, refined, repeat concept? How can you use this simple tool to help you on your emotional intelligence journey?

Communicate intention and impact

- How you want to come across to others may not be how you actually come across. Have you ever had that moment where you realize how you intended to come across to someone else was completely misinterpreted? It can give you that feeling of embarrassment, or guilt, or even shame. I know I've been in that situation, and more often than not, it's because I was so caught up in saying the right thing, I forgot to relax and focus on building a positive connection with the other person. All too often, we focus on what we say, and the exact message we want others to understand. But the impact we make is more about how someone else perceives us and our message, and less about the facts we want other people to grasp. Being adaptable and flexible in

how you communicate with others is key. This is why it's essential you don't focus on the exact message, but more on the intention, what you want the other person to take away from your interaction. Consider a sales manager managing a large team of sales conservatives. There'll be key messages that everyone has to know. Facts, figures, targets, marketing information. Some of this information will need to be documented for clarity and legal reasons. But the majority of these messages are delivered or reinforced informally. One sales consultant may respond to a one-to-one briefing. Another may prefer an email exchange or an informal chat over a coffee. The biggest hit I can give you here, is rather than focusing on exactly what to say before each interaction, focus on the key messages. This will make each interaction more focused, and you'll be adaptable enough to change your communication style, depending on the circumstance, and the person you're communicating with. If people understand your intentions, even if the execution isn't quite right, they're much more likely to listen and engage with you. And you have a greater chance of building trust, which is a critical part of managing relationships. Focusing on intent provides you with a number of advantages. It can boost your confidence. As you'll understand, it doesn't matter exactly how you deliver a message, people will connect with the intent behind it. It will give you the ability to be flexible in your approach, relieving some of the pressure associated with crafting that perfect message delivery. You'll also come across as natural and authentic, which is a huge bonus when connecting with people. The key is to think about the other person's perspective, how the other person perceives you. And remember, effective communication is about the message received by the other person, not the message you want to give. Think to yourself, what do I want the other person to take away from this interaction? And when you're clear on that, match your tone, and language, and body language to help communicate that message. How can you apply this to your working life? Where are the opportunities to focus on intent and key messages, rather than exact lines of communication? Take some time to consider how you can build this technique into your professional interaction with others.